

REDEFINING TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE AFTER THE ONTOLOGICAL TURN IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH DECOLONIALITY: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

ARTHUR K. MUHIA

PHD STUDENT, DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS, HUNGARY

MUHIA.ARTHUR@EDUPTE.HU

ORCID ID:0009-0006-7087-862X



Abstract

Contemporary twenty-first century literary and cultural studies are turning to ontology for both content and form. This multidisciplinary theoretical framework examines the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies, with a keen focus on the African perspective. The analysis has an acute interest in epistemic violence and epistemicides in the decoloniality discourse anchored in a sociological contextualization of the ontological turn. Additionally, it proposes a change in basic assumptions regarding the prevailing transnational global ontology, as parts of the broader effort to recover alternative ontologies of inhabiting and conceptualizing the world. By alternative ontologies I mean worldviews in which the human, non-human, ancestral, and spiritual worlds are entangled, and shape both experience itself and the representation of experience. Part one outlines how alternative modes of being and knowing can emerge in narrative form. Second part address imperialism and coloniality epistemic violence against the ontology of the Global South. Part three focuses on the epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology via postcolonial criticism alongside decoloniality. Employing both linear and spiral modes of qualitative data exposition, the framework will contribute to a transnational interpretation of African, and African diasporic literary texts, beyond the postcolonial perspective that they have potently been subjected.

Keywords

decoloniality, epistemic violence, ontological turn, transnational literature

Received: May 4, 2025 | 1st Revision: November 11, 2025 | Accepted: December 12, 2025

Muhia, Arthur K. (2025). Redefining Transnational Literature After the Ontological Turn in the Global South Decoloniality: African Perspective. Hungarian Journal of African Studies [Afrika Tanulmányok], 19(3), 47-70.

1. Introduction

Among the contemporary decoloniality phenomenon witnessed in the twenty-first century literary and cultural studies, is the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies. This multidisciplinary theoretical framework examines the nexus, with a keen focus on the African perspective. The analysis has an acute interest in epistemic violence and epistemicides in the decoloniality discourse. Additionally, it proposes a change in basic assumptions in the regarding the prevailing transnational global ontology, anchored in a sociological contextualization of the ontological turn. Although literary texts do not provide us with direct, unmediated access to experiences, they lend meaning to these experiences by framing them through communicative and circulatory forms, such as novels, poetry, music, and drama, among others. Cheah (2016:3) argues that while literature does not merely mirror the real world, its imaginative capacity does not exert a causal influence on reality. Instead, literature is confined to creating a world through diegesis and mimesis that maintains enough consistency in its events to be considered a possible world. Consequently, it represents a cartographical depiction of the world based on specific criteria and principles of knowledge and information production. Since literature is a product of society, the changes and developments within that society can be reflected in its literary works.

Herman (2007) observes that authors design literary texts, consciously or not, to affect the audience in a particular way. Similarly, Wa Thiong'o (1981) affirms that a writer always writes not only to entertain people, but also to change society for the better. He continues to describe that reading and writing of literary texts are never neutral activities; there are interests, powers, passions, and pleasures entailed, no matter how aesthetic or entertaining the work may be. Writers cannot separate themselves from the activities and events happening in their society, as they are directly affected by them. As a result, they often depict these occurrences with the intention of encouraging others to perceive their society in a certain way. On the other hand, literary criticism aims to explain and interpret the literary work, including its production, meanings, design, and aesthetic value. This research is based on this context. Employing both linear and spiral modes of qualitative data exposition, the framework will contribute to a transnational interpretation of African and African diasporic literary texts, beyond the postcolonial perspective that they have potently been subjected.

My analysis in this study goes beyond simply problematizing the ontology of the Global South. More significantly, I address an existential gap in decoloniality theory regarding the ontological turn in the Global South within transnational literary studies. I do not aim to provide a rigid dogma or a strict list of criteria for eligibility claims. Instead, I develop an interpretive method for locating and interpreting the ontological turn in ways that are intersectionally conscious and contextually relevant. To achieve this, the paper is divided into two main parts: firstly, ontology and the ontological turn in transnational literary studies; secondly, the ontological turn from an African contextual background. This part is discussed in two sections: imperial-

ism and coloniality, which address epistemic violence against the ontology of the Global South, and postcolonial criticism alongside decoloniality, which focuses on the epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology.

2. Ontology and the Ontological Turn in Transnational Literary Studies

Ontology is the science of being, which informs what we know as reality and the essence of life. It is understood through epistemology, which elaborates on how we know what we refer to as ontology. Appreciating ontology should not be a mere recall of ontological facts, but also their relevance to the ecosystem (Lutz, 2014, and Kerridge, 2014). Ontology is not static; it constantly strives to progress from simple to complex forms. The historical developments of a specific ontology provide an essential reference point, helping it understand which direction is forward and which is backward. This awareness enables its members to make efforts to advance and to resist moving backward. Conversely, an ontology that lacks a clear understanding of its own history will have a vague sense of which direction leads forward and which leads backward. Such an ontology progresses imprecisely and can easily become lost. Ontology is acquired in various ways and can be utilized differently, one of which is through literary studies.

Literature employs language in an artistic manner, serving as both a communication system and a carrier of ontology, due to its dual role as both the means and the carrier of memory. Therefore, literary texts are the people's ontological experience memory bank. As noted by Wa Thiong'o (2009), literary representation in creative imagination is one of the greatest practices for remembering and expressing memory. The relationship of writers to their ontological memory is central to their quest and mission. Memory is the link between the past and the present, between space and time, and it is the basis for writers' dreams and visions. Memory and consciousness are inseparable. Prevailing ontology shapes the existence of a popular memory in the form of a particular ideology in a society in a specific time and space. Eagleton (1976) defines ideology as thoughts, values, and emotions that human beings portray in their society during a specific period, which can be expressed through literary works. Both the present and the history of a society can be understood through the existing ideology, with a special focus on how it has evolved over time. Ideology guides the society's values, actions, politics, economic and social policies, and its general worldview. Literary texts are ideologies that are presented in an artistic manner and language. They tend to inform about how life was, how it is, and how it can be in the near future. Artists will thus write for or against the prevailing ontological ideology with the aim of improving society.

The transnational perspective originates from the concept of something in transit, which means mobility, migrating, travelling, and exchanging. It is characterized by complex back-and-forth movement of people and ontological systems during which appropriation and transformation in political, economic, and social dimensions of human life occur. Both the form and content of literary studies have undergone a drastic transformation since the late 20th century due to growing interest in the

transnational nature of literary production, circulation, and consumption. This led to the emergence of comparative, multicultural, postcolonial, and world literature fields of study, which have dramatically transformed the geographical and cultural organization of literary studies. Consequently, contemporary literature engages and explores experiences that transcend beyond nation-state boundaries, such as migration and diaspora settlements. Transnational contexts are integral to the history of globalization. Thus, the two processes are interconnected.

Jay (2010) defines globalization first as a contemporary phenomenon linked to the development of electronic media, the rise of transnational corporations, global financial institutions, and proliferating forms of entertainment that easily leap national boundaries. Secondly, it is a historical phenomenon running back to at least the sixteenth century and incorporating the histories of colonization, decolonization, and postcolonialism. He continues to argue that it is both a political phenomenon that ought to be analyzed from a materialist viewpoint, and a cultural phenomenon, particularly the homogenizing effects of cultural globalization. Harvey (1990) further elaborates that mechanization and technology increasingly diminish the constraints space puts on time. With the invention and growing sophistication of shipping, railways, motor, and air transport, the time it takes to move across space has continually shrunk, accelerating the collapse of boundaries and borders, and facilitating economic and cultural globalization.

According to Giddens (1990), globalization should be understood as the intensified worldwide social relations that connect distant localities in such a way that local happenings are influenced by activities and events occurring many miles away, and vice versa. Moreover, economically, globalization is characterized by the dominance of transnational corporations, which turn the world into a single market for commodities, labour, and capital. What Giddens fails to examine fully is whether the world-wide transnational influence is on an equal basis or is skewed. Something that this research intends to explore from an ontological perspective, guided by Gikandi (1996), who recognizes that the liberatory effects of transnationalism produced in globalization are largely based on a Global North ontology—the metaphorical Western Europe ontology, with traces of coloniality.

From the discussion above, the twenty-first-century transnationalism in literary studies is propagated by globalization objectivism. It has assigned the Global North ontology superiority of being the singular, totally accurate center of describing transnationalism. Transnational literature assumed the Global North ontology as the standard measure of transnationalism. To advance coloniality, literary studies were qualified as a specifically Global North achievement. A mark of greatness and civilization meant a literary expression of the Global North (Lutz, 2014). On the other hand, the ontological turn advocates for subjectivism in the social reality of human consciousness, projections, and interpretations of transnationalism.

In this research, the Global South ontology is the metaphorical ontological ideologies associated with specific regions of the world, namely African ontology and African-American ontology. Additionally, it incorporates the transnational

effects on these ontologies, as made possible through migration and diaspora experiences. This kind of intersectional approach is only possible when there is a plurality of ontologies; hence, the need to shift the ontological center. As a result, the transnational material being studied becomes activated, allowing it to define its own terms of existence and engagement. This process enables us to perceive aspects of a phenomenon that we had not anticipated or imagined. Thus, the ontological turn is not merely about viewing something from a different perspective; it also encompasses the exploration of different elements related to the phenomenon.

Althusser (1981) asserts that in a socially stratified society, the ruling class maintains dominance by employing two main approaches. Firstly, through governance agencies such as government officials, the army, police, prisons, and courts of law, among others. These agencies propagate the ideology directly and sometimes forcefully. Secondly, dominance is maintained through ideological agencies such as religion, education, literary texts, media, and cultural practices. These agencies are key in the socialization process of members of society. The ruling class strives to ensure that the ruled class agrees to be socialized according to their ideological beliefs. Althusser's approach is a Marxist one, which is a general perspective. In my study, the class struggle is between the dominant Global North ontology and the oppressed Global South ontology.

The oppressed ontology is deeply entangled in the concept of its contamination, over which it may have no control, and the dominant ontology is involved in the superiority of its purity, which it can only exert through the inferiority of the dominated. The ontological turn has crossed and destabilized the North-South geopolitical transnational border in the opposite direction, from South to North. The border had been enjoying the monopoly to regulate the traffic of ontological models. Still, the Global South ontology in this study does not pretend to discard the Global North ontology. New rationalities that were once suppressed are reemerging, leading to the creation of hybrid and diverse ideas. In the future, we may see a transnational ontology following the ontological turn—a framework in which various ontologies can engage in democratic communication and sustainable cooperation for the common good. Within this context, the ontological turn in the literary representation of women will be explored through a more focused intersectional and transnational perspective.

Consequently, contemporary literature engages and explores experiences that transcend beyond nation-state boundaries, such as migration and diaspora settlements. Transnational contexts are integral to the history of globalization. Thus, the two processes are interconnected.

As noted by Holbraad & Pedersen (2017), the ontological turn is a theoretical and methodological approach that resonates with wider developments in contemporary philosophy, anthropology, science, and technology, among other disciplines in recent years. As an analytical method, it originates from the historical development of anthropological inquiry of ultimate reality or essence that may ground it in a substantive sense. The ontological turn shifts the focus from epistemological questions to ontological ones in order to address epistemological problems. Instead of asking how one perceives things, it asks what actually exists to be perceived. This approach in literary criticism encourages the development of new ways of thinking. From an ontological perspective, critical attention moves away from the universal to the particular, from the center to the periphery, and from broad generalizations about what makes people the same to a more nuanced understanding of what makes people different. It puts in question the universal, the pure, and the homogeneous, especially when defined from or in terms of a Western globalization perspective. It is fundamentally grounded in the principles of Global South ontological self-determination, yet transnationally elastic enough to have global relevance.

The ontological turn in literary studies redefines transnational literature. Bulson (2018:1-3) defines the novel as “a prose text in which an author explores and examines, by means of experimental selves (characters), the great themes of existence. It is one of the few places, in fact, that human beings can go to find other voices, other stories, other locations that help them contemplate who, what, and where they are, and it all happens, strangely enough, with plots and characters that are fictional, in places real and imagined, and they exist in our minds long after the last page has been turned. It transports us somewhere else to encounter people we have never met and places we have never been. In a narratable form and combining it with the fictional lives of characters, novelists make it possible for us to understand the unity of the past, present, and future in our own lives.” He continues to assert that the novel has a global reach; it not only travels around the world over time, but also undergoes internal transformation along the way. This transformation often responds to specific literary traditions and both print and non-print cultures.

In this study, the term ‘transnational literature’ refers to any literature addressing contemporary global concerns, such as climate change, democracy, the politics of the human body, spirituality, tourism, migration, and diasporic experiences, among others, regardless of the language used in writing or the author’s nationality. These literary works circulate beyond their original language, either in their native form or in translation. They represent experiences and the complexities of life, and interrogate them. This text serves as a form of literary cartography, providing a way to navigate information about a world characterized by ontological diversity. The perceptions of different ontologies shape literary texts based on what specific ontological frameworks reveal about various transnational themes. Since literary texts reflect societal realities in an artistic manner, a systematic analysis of how women are portrayed in literature can shed light on the ontological shift within transnational discourse.

Artistic expressions, including literary works, mirror societal conditions. Every character and narrator in a literary text reflects the writer's perspective on various societal issues. They convey the worldview of the society in which they exist. For instance, the experiences of female characters and narrators should be critically examined, as these experiences are not merely a representation of what happens to women. Instead, they encompass how these characters interpret and respond to their circumstances. Some experiences are chosen by them for various reasons, while others are imposed upon them, often against their will or because they seem unavoidable. These experiences may become deeply ingrained in their sense of identity. Furthermore, discourse is shaped and limited by prevailing ontological structures. To understand how meaning is constructed within a text, we must analyze its structure with consideration of both linguistic and ontological dimensions.

3. Imperialism and Coloniality Epistemic Violence Against the Global South Ontology

This section is divided into two historical periods: imperialism, and coloniality, which address tools used to dominate the ontology of the Global South. These concepts reveal a common thread of Eurocentric epistemic violence, which creates an epistemic hierarchy favoring the ontology of the Global North over that of the Global South. This hierarchy has been institutionalized within global transnationalism. This systematic manifestation of epistemic injustice takes into account the historical context of colonization and the ongoing effects of coloniality.

3.1. Imperialism Epistemic Violence

Essentially, imperialism, also referred to as colonialism, is a geopolitical phenomenon whereby a state seeks to extend its control forcibly beyond its own borders over other states and peoples. Such control is usually not just political, but also economic and cultural. A ruling state, the colonizer, will often impose not only its own terms of trade but also its own political ideals, cultural values, and often its own language upon a subject state, the colonized. Although imperialism has several phases dating back to human civilization, this research draws heavily from the geopolitical phase of the Global North's (Western Europe) dominion over the Global South (Africa) during the last half of the nineteenth century, the colonial period, and the postcolonial period.

Habib (2005) identifies three main motives behind Global North imperialism. First, there are economic reasons, such as the need for raw materials and the search for markets to sell surplus production during the Industrial Revolution. Second, social Darwinism plays a role, viewing the competition among nations as a natural struggle for survival, where stronger nations are perceived as having the right to subjugate weaker ones. Third, there is the Global North's Enlightenment belief in civilization and progress, which justifies bringing the benefits of a so-called superior civilization to the Global South and liberating its people from their supposed ignorance. Thus, imperialism became a mode of incorporating the Global South into a skewed

transnationalism. Building on this argument, Mignolo & Walsh (2024:75) assert that the colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught certain aspects of their culture selectively, in a way that aimed to recruit some of the dominated peoples into their own power structures. European culture was transformed into a seductive means of access to power. This cultural Europeanization became an aspiration for many. It served as a pathway for individuals to participate in, and ultimately to attain, the same material benefits and power enjoyed by Europeans; it was a way to conquer nature for development. This dualism laid the foundation for the Global North's perspective to be presented as the universal ontological model, overshadowing all non-Global North ontologies.

Colonization of Africa began with the activities of explorers from the Global North, such as Vasco da Gama, who explored and captured the East Coast of Africa with the help of Portugal's King Henry II, also known as the Navigator. His actions were accompanied by a wave of Christian missionaries who sought not only to spread their faith but also to dominate and challenge the humanity of those they conquered. This is the sort of Christianity championed by colonialists like King Leopold II of Belgium, as evident in his 1883 speech to colonial missionaries and articulated in the letter below:

“Reverends, Father, and Dear Compatriots: The task that is given to us to fulfill is very delicate and requires much tact. You will go certainly to evangelize, but your evangelization must inspire above all Belgium interests. Your principal objective in our mission in the Congo is never to teach the niggers to know God. Thus, they know already. They speak and submit to a Mungu, one Nzambi, one Nzakomba, and what else I don't know. They know that to kill, to sleep with someone else's wife, to lie and to insult is bad. Have courage to admit it; you are not going to teach them what they know already. Your essential role is to facilitate the task of administrators and industrials, which means you will go to interpret the gospel in the way it will be the best to protect your interests in that part of the world. For these things, you have to keep watch on disinteresting our savages from the richness that is plenty in their underground. To avoid that they get interested in it, and make you a murderous competition and dream one day to overthrow you.

Your knowledge of the gospel will allow you to find texts ordering, and encouraging your followers to love poverty. Like happier are the poor because they will inherit the heaven and it's very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. You have to detach from them and make them disrespect everything which gives courage to affront us. ...Your action will be directed essentially to the younger ones, for they won't revolt when the recommendation of the priest is contradictory to their parent's teachings. ...”

This quotation describes how the colonizer's economic interests, hidden in religion, aimed at turning the Africans against the African spirituality ontologies. The spirituality is largely connected to the environment, more so the natural resources in the ecosystem. Perhaps this letter explains the paradox of Africa being the natural resources richest continent in the world, but the African people are the economically poorest of the global poor.

The letter goes on to explain why it is crucial to target children who find themselves in a dilemma between obeying the beliefs of their biological parents and those of their spiritual parents, the priests. Furthermore, the primary aim of the education provided in mission schools, as described in the letter, was to teach students to read the materials presented to them without encouraging critical thinking. This method ensures that they remain submissive to the colonialists and refrain from rebellion. The letter concludes with a paragraph that encapsulates the concept of epistemic violence:

“...Institute a confessional system, which allows you to be good detectives denouncing any black that has a different consciousness contrary to that of the decision-maker. Teach the niggers to forget their heroes and to adore only ours. Never present a chair to a black that comes to visit you. Don't give him more than one cigarette. Never invite him for dinner even if he gives you a chicken every time you arrive at his house.”

(This letter is courtesy of Dr. Vera Nobles & Dr. Chiedozie Okoro in <http://allafrica.com/stories/200510060035.html>)

This letter was exposed to the world by Mr. Moukouani Muikwani Bukoko, born in the Congo in 1915, who, in 1935, while working in the Congo, purchased a second-hand Bible from a Belgian priest who had forgotten that the speech was in the Bible. From the letter, it is evident that during the colonial era, the spread of Christianity was a process of ontological emptying of the colonized, spearheaded by the missionaries. Mazrui (1978:11) notes that colonialism essentially replaced African indigenous knowledge with European memory. The church and the school played a pivotal role in this transformation, shaping how people perceived themselves and their relationship with the world.

In this study, I emphasize the colonial ontological question more than the economic aspects. The radical epistemic violence prioritizes the control of ontology over the control of the economy. This perspective aligns with Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 137), who argues that during the rise of imperialism and colonialism, colonial invaders targeted not only land and human resources but also the mental universe of the people they colonized. The mental universe of the colonized experienced profound epistemological violence. One long-term consequence of this invasion was the imposition of the debilitating Hegelian master-servant dialectic, which portrayed Europe as the home of knowers (teachers/civilizers of the world) and Africa as a land of ignorant and primitive sub-human beings. Europe was seen as the originator of

knowledge, while Africa was relegated to a position of imitation; Europe was viewed as the source of science and rationality, and Africa was perceived as the ‘Dark Continent’, consumed by magic and superstition. However, I am not ignoring the Marxist colonial matrix of power in the expropriation of land and the exploitation of labor in an economic context. As Quijano (2007) correctly observes, the colonial will to power, mediated by ontological knowledge, becomes the infrastructure, while the economy becomes the instrumental superstructure to implement the colonial will.

Some imperialists invaded Africa in response to losing some of their territory in the Global North. For example, the French occupied West Africa after losing their mineral-rich provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. After the Turks denied the countries of the Global North access to Asia and the Far East for spices and other goods through Turkey, they sought an alternative sea route through Africa. France, Britain, and Egypt jointly constructed the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869. However, Britain later monopolized the ownership of the canal and subsequently occupied Egypt as a colonial power in 1882. To compensate for its losses, France occupied several African territories, including Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Additionally, France threatened to divert the Nile’s waters, potentially turning Egypt into a desert by seizing territories to the south. Feeling threatened by these actions, the British quickly occupied Uganda and Sudan to secure the source and path of the Nile River, which is the primary water supply for Egypt.

Realizing that Uganda is a landlocked country, the British went further with their occupation, acquiring Kenya to link Uganda with the Indian Ocean coastline. This led to the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway to ease the administration of the vast territory. To recoup the costs of railway construction, European settlers were encouraged to engage in farming. As a result, Africans lost their land to settler plantations and were forcefully settled in concentration reserves, which were akin to modern-day slums. Some became squatters on these plantations. For the first time in history, many Africans became homeless. Colonial governments then began taxing them to ensure they provided cheap labor for the settler plantations, thereby raising tax revenue. The Kipande (pass) system was introduced to control the movement of Africans in lands they had freely inhabited for generations.

As the Industrial Revolution in the Global North grew, the increased demand for raw materials, cheap labor, and a market for industrial goods, along with the realization of the availability of deep pockets of minerals in Africa, led to invasion and a scramble to acquire various parts of Africa during the 19th century. King Leopold II of Belgium endeavored to create a personal empire in Africa. In 1876, Leopold convened the Brussels Geographical Conference, where he established the International African Association, a business company comprising explorers and traders with a mission to civilize Africa, abolish the slave trade, and promote free trade. As a result of the activities of his agent, Henry Morton Stanley, who created the Congo Free State colony, Leopold established a personal empire in 1884. The scramble almost led to war in the Global North, which was resolved through an organized policy

known as the partition of Africa. It was the activities of King Leopold II, which led to intense rivalry among European nations over the rich natural resources endowed in the Congo, that led to the convening of the Berlin Conference in 1884.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal were competing in Africa for colonies to boost their social, economic, and political standing. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 was convened by Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, where representatives from the Global North divided Africa without considering the needs or rights of its inhabitants. This event marked the beginning of the invasion and colonization of African land and people. By 1914, with the exceptions of Liberia and Ethiopia, the entire continent was colonized. Ethiopia successfully resisted Italy's invasion, while Liberia was established as a state for freed slaves by the same colonizers. Ex-slaves were repatriated to Africa, where they founded an independent republic on a colonized continent.

A colonialist mindset denigrates and dehumanizes the colonized subjects, making it easier for the colonizer to exploit, abuse, or even kill the subalterns. It victimizes the colonized, while simultaneously stunting the colonizer's intellect and blocking their capacity to accept the indigenous ontology of the colonized. In agreement with this idea, Makuba (2007) and Ongutu & Kenyanchui (1991) describe how the German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770-1831) claimed that Africa has no civilization to exhibit. He argued that the spirit of civilization originated in the East (Asia) and then migrated and matured in the West (Europe), much like the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. According to Hegel, Africa did not come into contact with

Realizing that Uganda is a landlocked country, the British went further with their occupation, acquiring Kenya to link Uganda with the Indian Ocean coastline. This led to the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway to ease the administration of the vast territory. To recoup the costs of railway construction, European settlers were encouraged to engage in farming. As a result, Africans lost their land to settler plantations and were forcefully settled in concentration reserves, which were akin to modern-day slums. Some became squatters on these plantations. For the first time in history, many Africans became homeless.

this spirit; therefore, when discussing civilization, Africa should not be included. He posited that Africa has no historical significance or development to showcase, describing it as having an “unhistorical, undeveloped spirit” still caught in a state of mere nature, not worthy of being presented at the threshold of world history. This misconception was used to justify the establishment of colonial rule.

As recently as the 1960s, the distinguished historian Hugh Trevor-Roper (1914-2003), then a professor at Oxford University, repeatedly told his students that Africa was a “dark continent” with no history. He suggested that perhaps, in the future, there would be African history to teach, but in the 1960s, he believed only the history of Europeans in Africa existed. To him, the rest was largely unknown, much like the history of pre-Columbian America. He argued that darkness is not a suitable subject for historical study. Both scholars, Hegel, and Trevor-Roper, overlooked the unique ancient civilizations that flourished in precolonial Africa, such as the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, the Kingdom of Aksum in Ethiopia, and the 10th-century Swahili Coast City-States in East Africa, among others. The classification of precolonial Africa as a “dark continent” stem from a misconception rooted in deliberate ignorance. Santos (2007) articulates this ignorance as “abyssal thinking,” a mindset that relegates certain human beings to a subhuman status, suggesting they possess no knowledge worth acknowledging. As Nangoli (2002) affirms, those who claim Africa is a dark continent must have visited the continent after sunset and left before dawn, as that is when Africa can be naturally dark. In this research, the term “dark continent” will be used symbolically to refer to the epistemic violence inflicted upon the continent’s ontology.

Moyo (2009) observes that imperialism has caused ontological misery in the Global South, which has led to the establishment of beggary and charity as transnational institutions, primarily through aid and grants, respectively. In a situation where the colonizer exploits the colonized for the supply of raw materials, the former will want the latter to internalize the ontology that claims that the nature of their unequal relation is divinely willed and nothing can be done about it. Through religious dogmas, the colonized are made to believe that they have sinned, and they should endure because in heaven they will find plenty (Kenyatta, 1938). Consequently, the colonized develop values of self-doubt, self-denigration, and a slave consciousness, looking up to the values of the superior colonizer (Wa Thiong’o 2009, 1983). Imperialism perpetuates and sustains negative associations with Blackness, using terms such as “black spot,” “black sheep,” “black market,” “blacklist,” and “black Satan.” In contrast, it promotes positive associations with Whiteness, exemplified by the white wedding dress as a symbol of purity, white representing peace, and the depictions of white angels and white Jesus. This civilizing mission was based on a false notion of racial and epistemic superiority held by the colonizers.

Wa Thiong’o (1986:9) joins this discussion, arguing that the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 was imposed through the sword and the bullet. However, the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of

coloniality in the formerly colonized states' education systems. The primary consequence of this process is ontological alienation. It involves a dislocation of the minds of the oppressed from their familiar context into a foreign, unknown territory, which ultimately leads to self-doubt. This continuous alienation separates individuals from their cognitive foundation, resulting in a persistent need to view oneself from an external perspective or through the eyes of a stranger. Consequently, one may begin to identify more with this foreign cognitive framework than with their own, shifting from a sense of self to an understanding of others (Wa Thiong'o, 2012: 39). In this context, epistemicide involves more than just the accidental displacement of different ontologies. By its very nature, epistemicide involves the intentional silencing, devaluing, and violent destruction of knowledge systems (Mignolo, 2011). Consequently, imperialism establishes and maintains an unequal relationship between the colonizer and the colonized ontologies. It is this ontological inequality that is being referred to as epistemic violence in this study.

Africans employed three primary approaches in their interactions with the imperialists: resistance, collaboration, or a combination of both. Through an armed struggle in 1957, Ghana, the first African country to gain independence, achieved its political independence. Other countries followed with the highest number gaining political independence in the 1960s. The last country was South Africa in 1992. However, the end of colonialism did not liberate the Global South ontology. It was immediately followed by neocolonialism and hegemonic coloniality as observed by Ake (1996: 3-4), who states that:

“...with a few exceptions, independence was not a matter of the nationalists' marshaling forces to defeat colonial regimes. Often, it was a matter of the colonizers' accepting the inevitable and orchestrating a handover of government to their chosen African successors who could be trusted to share their values and be attentive to their interests.”

This claim is supported by Said (1995:8), who correctly contends that “the history of post-colonial states in Africa is a very sad history; which begins in a period of independence and liberation with a lot of hopes.” Hope here is a foreshadowing of the contemporary ontological turn aiming at total emancipation from imperialism and coloniality.

3.2. Coloniality Epistemic Violence

Coloniality is a distinct concept from that of colonialism, although the two are linked. The latter refers strictly to a hegemonic structure of domination and exploitation in which control over a given population's public authority, production resources, and culture is held by another population of a different nationality, whose geopolitical centers are located in a different territorial authority. Quijano (2007) establishes that coloniality is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality. Therefore, it results from the long-term consequences of modernity, which replaced

colonialism, and hegemonically placed the people of the Global South in a situation where they will continue to be agents of reproducing the very Eurocentric ideologies that they struggled to abolish during the uprisings against colonialism. Coloniality views modernity as the Europeanization of the Global North and the subalternization of the Global South (Mignolo & Walsh, 2024).

The Global North-centered modernity establishes, organizes, and determines the center of hegemonic global power. Mignolo (2011:19) backs up this argument by examining its geo-linguistic context. He contends that modernity is founded in two classic languages: Greek and Latin. It is then unfolded in the six imperial and colonial European Renaissance languages: Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese (the languages of the Renaissance and early foundation of modernity/coloniality) and French, German, and English (the languages that have dominated from the Enlightenment to the present day). The linguistic hierarchy that exists between European and non-European languages favors communication, knowledge, and theoretical production in the former, while marginalizing the latter as mere producers of folklore or culture, rather than as sources of knowledge and theory. This situation has resulted in an ontological linguicide in the Global South. Wa Thiong'o (1986:28) eloquently described the crisis of alienation through linguicide, which is anchored in the deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, thinking, formal education, and mental development from the language of daily interaction in the home and in Global South communities. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they occupy two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a large social scale, it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. He concludes that this situation is achieved through the alienation aspect of the Global North-centered education systems operating in the Global South.

Linguicide as a key aspect of reproduction of coloniality amounts to what Fanon (1968) termed ‘repetition without change,’ that is, itself a product of the pitfalls of consciousness. This is possible because coloniality is not simply a process of conquest, annexation, occupation, settlement, domination, and exploitation. It entails the emptying of all indigenous knowledge form and content from the dominated brain. Moreover, it commits epistemic violence through distorting, disfiguring, and eventually destroying the ontology of the colonized.

Initially, literacy education in colonial Africa was primarily conducted by missionaries before being reinforced by colonial administrators. The education provided was basic and focused on a few main subjects, including Christianity, particularly the memorization of the New Testament from the Bible, as well as reading and writing in colonial languages. It also included some basic arithmetic and agricultural skills related to settler farming. It did not encourage critical thinking, but instead it rewarded rote memorization of basic literacy concepts and indoctrination. To ensure that Africans remained stagnant at the literacy level, the education system in colonial territories was racially segregated. This segregation was rooted in the belief that Africans were racially inferior and would never be accepted as equals to Europeans, even if they acquired a literacy education. The education system strongly

condemned both the theory and practice of African ontology. Before being admitted, individuals were required to renounce their cultural beliefs. Key achievements necessary for graduating from this literacy education with excellent grades included converting to Christianity, learning the colonial languages, and adopting the mannerisms associated with the colonizers, such as their naming conventions, eating habits, and clothing styles.

Even after colonialism, the effects of this literacy education in neocolonial Africa are evident in the form of education that is coloniality-appropriate. A coloniality-appropriate classroom teaches that Africa has approximately 40% of the world's natural resources and that its tropical climate offers the greatest biodiversity in the world. Therefore, Africa is a paradise on earth in every sense, but the African people live in hellish conditions because they are uncivilized. They comprise around 18% of the world's population and are poor, underdeveloped, and entirely dependent on loans, grants, and aid from the Global North for their survival. Coloniality-appropriate education ends there! Any student who can memorize and reproduce the appropriate information on a piece of paper is celebrated as an 'excellent scholar' of African studies. If we go just a little beyond the coloniality appropriate education, we can clearly see there is something wrong here. How can 18% of the world population, owning 40% of the world's natural resources, which are required by the rest of the globe, be the poorest of the global poor? If God created Africans rich by giving them the vast natural resources, who makes them poor? Who benefits from Africa's vast natural resources? The answers to these troubling questions rest in the ontological turn.

4. Postcolonialism and Decoloniality in the Epistemic Reawakening of Global South Ontology

"He's always fretting about how his books don't do well. I've told him he needs to write terrible things about his own people if he wants to do well. He needs to say Africans alone are to blame for African problems, and Europeans have helped Africa more than they've hurt Africa, and he'll be famous and people will say he's so *honest!*" (Chimamanda Ngozi (2013: 302), in *Americanah*)

Postcolonialism is rooted in the history of imperialism. It brings awareness of the geopolitical power struggle between the Global North and the Global South. Post-colonial literature and criticism emerged both during and after the struggle of many nations in the Global South for independence from colonial rule. The struggle can be dated to the period after the end of the Second World War in 1945, during which a large-scale process of decolonization of the territories subjugated by imperial powers occurred. Although postcolonial literature is the product of a complex set of transnational forces rooted in the cultural nature of colonization, decolonization, and migration of people from independent countries to Western European countries, Jay (2010) asserts that there is a distinction between postcolonial and transnational lit-

erature. Transnational is a broad concept that refers to any entity whose production, reception, and impact extend beyond national borders. This encompasses corporations, films, humanitarian organizations, literature, and more, and it has its roots in the broader study of globalization. In contrast, postcolonial pertains to a more specific set of historical and political forces related to colonization, resistance to the domination it entails, decolonization, and the pursuit of independence.

Habib (2005) and Young (2001) assert that the fundamental aims of postcolonial criticism are to: reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; determine the economic, political, and cultural impacts of colonialism on both the colonized peoples and the colonizing powers; analyze the process of decolonization; and, more importantly, participate in the goals of political liberation. This includes advocating for equal access to material resources, challenging forms of domination, and articulating political and cultural identities. Early voices of anti-imperialism stressed the need to develop or return to indigenous literary traditions to exorcize their cultural heritage from the specters of imperial domination. Other voices advocated for adapting Western ideals to serve their own political and cultural purposes. This struggle of postcolonial discourse extends to the domains of gender, race, ethnicity, and class.

Key publications for this discourse include: *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon (1952), Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel, *Things Fall Apart*, George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile*, published in 1960, followed by Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961. According to Young (2001), the crucial moment in postcolonial theory was the launch of the journal *Tricontinental* in 1966. It initiated the first global alliance of the peoples spanning three continents (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), against imperialism. Additional notable works are *Orientalism* (1978) and *Orientalism Reconsidered* (1986) by Edward Said. More recent work includes *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. Gayatri Spivak's *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), as well as contemporary works by Abdul Jan Mohamed, Benita Parry, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, among others.

Fanon argues that imperialism works to define the present and future of the colonized people and to destroy their identity through cultural (ontological) estrangement and defamiliarization. Therefore, cultural nationalism is a prerequisite for restoring confidence and creating a sense of identity. He asserts that imperialism destroyed the cultural life of the colonized people and that every “*effort is made to bring the colonized person to admit the inferiority of his culture ... to recognize the unreality of his nation, and, in the last extreme, the confused and imperfect character of his own biological structure*” (*Wretched of the Earth* p. 236). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon vividly described how skin color is the most obvious outward manifestation of race differences and how it has been used to judge humanity. Instead, he proposes that a person should be recognized beyond the biological manifestation of their skin color, as quoted below:

As soon as I desire, I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here and now, sealed into nothingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity" (*Black Skin, White Masks* p. 170).

The ontological turn in transnational literary studies is in response to the above-mentioned call, making Fanon's philosophy relevant to this study.

Edward Said's works draw on Marxism and Foucault's analysis of discourse as a form of power. He extends this analysis to elaborate on the role of cultural representation in the construction and maintenance of Orientalism. This concept refers to the relationship between the Orient and the Occident. The people of the Orient can only define themselves based on how the Occident categorizes them, often portraying them as less privileged and silenced "others." In Oriental discourse, the Orient is depicted as mysterious, irrational, uncivilized, and exotic, and its people are unable to represent themselves independently. Therefore, it falls to the virtuous, rational, and civilized Occident to represent them. My study aligns with Said's call for a decentered consciousness and the dismantling of systems of domination, which aims to deconstruct narratives and highlight the ontologies of the Orient.

Bhabha's mode of postcolonial criticism is grounded in how the colonized context facilitates the emergence of mimicry, leading to the development of hybridity in cultural identity. Hybridity constitutes a cultural displacement, a fragmentation of the self, and a sense of alienation. Due to the unequal power relations, the colonized mimics the colonizer, resulting in an unrecognizable and inferior culture. In my research, I equate Bhabha's concept of culture to ontology. Thus, the inferior culture is an inferior ontology. A traumatized ontology. Furthermore, mimicry represents an ironic compromise that suppresses one's own ontological identity, leaving one in a state of ambivalence and confusion. The ontological turn in transnational literary studies aims to address the aforementioned confusions and traumas.

In addition to deconstruction, Gayatri Spivak draws on Marxism and Feminism. Her thoughts are vital in my research due to her special interest in factors of ethnicity, class, and gender. Unlike Spivak's subaltern, who cannot speak or achieve self-legitimation, my research is based on the hypothesis that the subaltern is speaking through the ontological turn in transnational literary studies.

Decoloniality, in general, is the struggle for epistemic freedom, and specifically, the ontological liberation. Decoloniality emerged in response to the promises of modernity and the realities of coloniality, as introduced by Quijano (2007). He proposed that decoloniality requires epistemological reconstitution. Additionally, epistemological reconstitution cannot be accomplished by relying on the assumed universal model of the Global North. Instead, it must emerge from the diverse ontologies that have been disrupted by the coloniality of power through epistemicide, which refers to the systematic eradication of different ontological systems. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018: 52-54), decoloniality originated in the Global South after the Bandung Conference of the Non-Aligned countries in 1955, during the Cold

War, and subsequently spread worldwide. Representatives from twenty-nine governments of Asian and African nations gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss peace and the role of the Third World in the Cold War, economic development, and decolonization. They revealed the hidden face of modernity, namely, coloniality. Therefore, decolonization became a choice for those who needed to delink, rather than a decision made by those who were in a position to marginalize. From the perspective of the Non-Aligned states, decoloniality is their determination to detach themselves from both capitalism and communism. Decoloniality, therefore, means both the analytic task of unveiling the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to building a world in which many worlds will coexist.

In Africa, decoloniality has generally been understood to have begun with political decolonization, which reached its climax in the 1960s. However, contemporary epistemic violence has provoked a need to rethink decolonial trajectories beyond the attainment of political sovereignty, with a keen interest in the epistemological aspects of decolonization. Epistemic freedom serves as the foundation for the ontological turn in transnationalism because it addresses the fundamental issues of building critical consciousness. This is essential for achieving both political and economic freedom. Quijano (2007: 169) emphasizes this perspective by arguing that epistemological colonization—essentially, the colonization of the mind and imagination has significantly impacted African modes of knowing, knowledge production, and the creation of perspectives. Having performed these epistemicides, the constructors and drivers of global coloniality, which included Christian missionaries, proceeded to establish their own patterns of producing knowledge and modes of knowing as the only legitimate and scientific ways of understanding the world. They mystified their own patterns of knowing and knowledge production. However, they also attempt to consistently place these Euro-North American-centric patterns far out of reach for the dominated Global South.

The ontological challenge facing Africans is how to overcome epistemological coloniality as part of their effort to create decolonial futures. This vision for an African future is articulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063. However, the agenda is still grappling with how to empower Africans to take control of their own ontology and to position themselves as equal partners in transnational prosperity. Santos (2007: 78) contends that they should avoid the common trap of seeking solutions to coloniality within the confines of coloniality itself. It also demands the unpacking of the Cartesian notions of being and its relegation of African subjectivity to a perpetual state of becoming.

Lutz (2021) argues that a significant mental barrier to learning from the Global South is the concept of enlightenment as understood by the Global North, specifically the Cartesian principle “cogito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am). This is a concept that is entirely isolationist and shockingly solipsistic. It constructs the thinking subject as removed from any relations with the surrounding world, from time and place, from social relations and the ecosystem, and even from their own physical being. The “ego” in cogito ergo sum needs no body (nobody!), no land, no emotions, no oth-

ers, regardless of whether they are finned, winged, scaled, mineral, rooted, four-legged, or human. The Cartesian logic and rationality characteristic of the Enlightenment have created a disconnect between learning and the ontologies of the Global South. Lutz challenges the long-held global stereotype that all valuable knowledge worth teaching primarily originates from institutions of higher learning, such as universities. This narrative suggests that knowledge was first developed by the Greeks, then appropriated by the Romans, and subsequently spread throughout Western Europe. Through colonialism, this knowledge was purportedly introduced to the rest of the world, implying that other cultures were passively waiting for enlightenment.

The ontological turn in Cartesian discourse can be examined through the Ubuntu philosophy and the African sage philosophy, which resonate with many other ontologies worldwide. The Ubuntu axiomatic principle is “I am because we are”. The human being is essentially a relational, interdependent, and interconnected being who exists in and through relationships with other humans and the broader ecosystem. Individual identity and contributions are not denied but are seen as part of the whole. A successful individual is defined as someone who is committed to supporting others with integrity. Mbiti (1989) summarizes this as, “I am because we are, since we are therefore, I am”. Ubuntu focuses on the inclusivity of everyone within a community, their responsibility to others, and to the well-being of the ecosystem to ensure success for the present and future generations. Therefore, it is timeless in the sense that its ontology and epistemology have been passed down from previous generations and continue to apply to even the yet unborn generations. It goes beyond interpersonal connections. It also highlights the intimate connection between human beings and all other forms of existence in the universe. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of the natural and supernatural realms, as well as the physical and metaphysical, and both visible and invisible dimensions of existence. All entities-current human and nonhuman beings, ancestors, future generations, and the natural world-are interconnected (Ramose 2005; Mbiti 1989).

In Africa, decoloniality has generally been understood to have begun with political decolonization, which reached its climax in the 1960s. However, contemporary epistemic violence has provoked a need to rethink decolonial trajectories beyond the attainment of political sovereignty, with a keen interest in the epistemological aspects of decolonization.

Ubuntu argues that the Global South ontology's capacity to represent non-humans is integral to understanding it as a human endeavor. It asserts that non-human species in the ecosystem have always played a crucial role in ontology. This has been represented in ancient oral traditions, as well as in contemporary written and electronic works. The Global South ontology examines literary representations of non-human entities to reveal how these depictions significantly influence human culture and our understanding of what it means to be human. As a result, the relationship between humans and non-humans challenges the Cartesian dichotomy that is often associated with the Global North. Examining the nexus between literature and animal studies, Robles (2016) challenges the traditional boundaries between humans and non-humans, questioning the ethical implications of human dominion over animals and highlighting the ways in which animals influence human society and culture. By investigating the roles animals play in various contexts, Animal Studies seeks to understand the mutual influence between humans and animals, promoting a more equitable and compassionate relationship between species within the ecosystem.

Robles's perspective quite agrees with that of Kerridge (2014) regarding ecocritical approaches to literary form and genre, which asserts that, for human beings to be able to curb the contemporary global climate challenges, literary studies have the responsibility of getting people to urgently care and make the environment a real, practical priority. For this to be achieved, a strong ontological approach in ecocriticism should depart from the Cartesian Enlightenment's dualism, which separates mind from body and humanity from nonhuman nature. This will, in turn, allow for an ontological fluidity perspective, which would build up a principle of the human self as constituted and maintained by the ecosystem, as advocated in the Global South Ubuntu philosophy discussed above.

African sage philosophy, or philosophical sagacity as coined by Odera Oruka (1991), expands the etymological definition of philosophy as love of wisdom to an Ubuntu-like ethical development of the ecosystem. It represents the thoughts of indigenous sages-wise men and women who critically engage with the established cultures and ontologies of their respective societies. Oruka argues that it is important not only to love wisdom, but also to possess and practice it. For him, a philosopher (or sage) is someone who consistently seeks wisdom, making this pursuit an essential part of life rather than just an occasional interest. In the field of the historiography of philosophy, sage philosophy examines both written and oral sources to reconstruct the history of philosophical thought. Recently, there has been an increased focus on oral philosophical inquiries expressed through various forms of art, indigenous spirituality, songs, dances, and stories. These mediums embody ontologies, epistemologies, metaphysics, ethics, and the science of being in the world, and they have begun to receive attention from a philosophical perspective. Philosophy in Africa is undoubtedly leading the way in this field. Although it is generally acknowledged that philosophy also manifests itself in oral practices, such as conversation or instruction,

the question remains as to how oral philosophical traditions can be incorporated into the history of philosophy. This is subject to several methodological questions from a global perspective (Graness, 2022).

Accountability in orality is a vital aspect of African sage philosophy, in the sense of both gaining ontology and transmitting it orally from one generation to another. Before the development of the art of literacy, all human languages existed in oral form. Any given society uses its indigenous language, or the language it has acquired, to convey what it is, what it does, and the worldview it holds. Language conveys the society's social, political, cultural, and economic endeavors. Language is not a mere string of words. It has a suggestive power that extends well beyond its immediate and lexical meaning. It is the repository of values that have evolved within a society over time and are transmitted from one generation to another. Therefore, language is the main carrier of ontology. Making someone despise their language in favor of another is essentially making them despise the values inherent in their own language, and ultimately, the ontology of their society that utilizes that language. On the other hand, they will admire the favored language of the one initiating the humiliation, and hence the values and ontology carried by it.

With the development of literacy, global systems like colonialism led to the languages of the Global North, such as English, being viewed as superior to the languages of the Global South, which largely remained in oral form. This position still exists in contemporary transnational literary studies, where English is often regarded as the natural language for transnational literature, thereby disqualifying a whole set of ontologies contained in languages positioned lower on the hierarchy. They are associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, uncivilization, humiliation, and punishment. In some parts of the Global South, English has become more than a language; it is the language, and all the others must bow before it in deference. English has become the measure of intelligence and ability in the human experience, culture, and the perception of reality (wa Thiong'o, 1981, 2009). On the other hand, the transnational turn advocates for accountability in orality and in other languages worldwide. This discourse is being spearheaded by decolonial theorists such as Santos (2014) and Mignolo & Walsh (2024), who are calling for the equal treatment of previously marginalized and suppressed indigenous knowledge traditions from the Global South. A liberation of the oral traditions of formerly colonially oppressed peoples from their marginalized position in the scientific system is one of the central concerns of decolonial theory. Its representatives demand that orality be recognized as a quality and not devalued as a deficiency. It is argued that the integration of orally transmitted philosophical traditions is indispensable and an essential aspect of decolonization. With the help of technological inventions such as recording media that reproduce sound and images, as well as oral aspects like gestures, facial expressions, and the rhythm of the language, among other extra-linguistic components, the redefinition of transnational literature is conveniently

facilitated. Before technological advancements, the ontologies of the Global South were underrepresented in transnational contexts. When they began appearing through writing only, they were always accompanied by losses of the extra-linguistic components highlighted above. The ontological turn in transnational literature is striving to ensure that the orality aspects of Global South ontologies are adequately represented, even in written texts, through various literary techniques.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the nexus between the ontological turn in cultural anthropology, and transnational literary studies in this study has gone beyond a simple historical discussion of the issues surrounding the ontologies of the Global South. Instead, it has developed a decolonial interpretive discourse aimed at understanding the ontological shift, as parts of the broader effort to recover alternative ontologies of inhabiting and conceptualizing the world. This analysis is divided into two main parts. The first part has examined how imperialism and coloniality serve as tools that have dominated the ontology of the Global South, highlighting their shared Eurocentric epistemic violence. This creates an epistemic hierarchy that favors the ontology of the Global North over that of the Global South, a hierarchy that has been institutionalized within global transnationalism. This systematic manifestation of epistemic injustice considers the historical context of colonization and the continuing coloniality. The second part has elaborated on how postcolonial criticism and decoloniality have facilitated an epistemic reawakening of the Global South's ontology, considering the Ubuntu philosophy and the African sage philosophy, which resonate with many other ontologies around the world. Epistemic freedom serves as the foundation for the ontological turn in transnationalism because it addresses the fundamental issues of building critical consciousness. This is essential for achieving both political and economic freedom.

The redefined transnational literature encompasses any literature addressing contemporary global concerns, such as climate change, democracy, the politics of the human body, spirituality, tourism, migration, and diasporic experiences, among others, regardless of the language used in writing or the author's nationality. These literary works circulate beyond their ontological origins, whether in their original language or in translation. They represent experiences and complexities of life while also interrogating them. Thus, they create a literary cartography that transports information about a world unified in ontological multiplicity. ☀

References

- Adichie, C. N. (2013). *Americanah*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Bulson, E. (Ed.) (2018). *The Cambridge companion to the novel*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Cheah, P. (2016). *What is a world? : on postcolonial literature as world literature*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gikandi, S. (1996) *Maps of Englishness: writing identity in the culture of colonialism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Graness, A. (2022) *The status of oral traditions in the history of philosophy: Methodological considerations*. South African Journal of Philosophy, 41:2, 181-194,
- Griffiths, M. R. (2018). *Indigenous literature in postwar Australia*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.157> on 04/05/2024
- Habib, M. A. R. (2005). *Literary criticism from Plato to the present an introduction*. Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell
- Harvey, D. (1990). *The condition of postmodernity: an enquire into the origins of cultural change*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Herman, D., et al. (Eds) (2012). *Narrative theory: core concepts and critical debates*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Holbraad, M. and Pedersen, M. (2017). *The ontological turn: an anthropological exposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Jay, P. (2010). *Global matters, the transnational turn in literary studies*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Kenyatta, J. (1938). *Facing mount Kenya: the tribal life of the Gikuyu*. London: Martusecker & Warburg Ltd
- Kerridge, R. (2014). Ecocritical approaches to literary form and genre. In Garrard G (Ed), *The Oxford handbook of ecocriticism*, (pg. 362-376). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (1993) . *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Lutz, H. (2021). “Theory coming through story” Indigenous knowledges and Western academia. In Devy G. N. & Davis G.V (Eds), *Performance and knowledge*, (pgs. 96-116). New York: Routledge.
- Makumba, M. (2007). *Introduction to African philosophy*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Mazrui, A. A. (1986). *The Africans: a triple heritage*. Boston : Little Brown & Co.
- Mbiti, J. (1989). *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- Mignolo, W. D (2011). *The darker side of western modernity global futures, decolonial options*. London: Duke University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D., Segato, R., & Walsh, C. E (Eds) (2024). *Foundational essays Anibal Quijano on the coloniality of power*. London: Duke University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D. & Walsh, C. E., (2018). *On decoloniality concepts analytics praxis*. London: Duke University Press
- Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux
- Nangoli C. M. (2002). *No more lies about Africa*. East Orange: N.J:A.H.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2018). *Epistemic freedom in Africa, deprovincialization and decolonization*. New York: Routledge.
- Ongutu M. A., & Kenyanchui S. S. (1991). *An introduction to African history*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.

- Oruka, H. O. (1991). *Sage philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy*. Nairobi: African Centre for Technology Studies Press.
- Ramose, M. B. (2005). *African philosophy through Ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books Publishers.
- Robles, M. O. (2016). *Literature and animal studies*. London: Routledge.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (2012). *Globalectics theory and the politics of knowing*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- _____. (2009). *Re-membering Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publisher.
- _____. (1981). *Decolonizing the mind: the politics of language in African literature*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publisher.
- Young, R. J. (2001). *Postcolonialism: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.